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State of California

**JIMINY CRICKET'S ENVIRONMENTALITY CHALLENGE WINNERS  
HONORED AT DISNEYLAND RESORT CEREMONY**

Anaheim, California – An excited fifth grade class from Sonoma County's El Verano Elementary School was honored as environmental heroes today at the Disneyland Resort in Anaheim. The students were awarded the top honor during an all-expense-paid trip to the Disneyland Resort as part of this year's Jiminy Cricket's Environmentality Challenge program. The statewide competition promotes *Environmentality*<sup>™</sup> – thinking and acting environmentally – among elementary school students.

Teacher David Neubacher and his students were awarded the honor during a special ceremony at Disney's California Adventure Sun Plaza this morning.

California Secretary for Resources Mike Chrisman said the fifth graders are to be admired for their environmental interest and work. "We congratulate this year's winners of the Jiminy Cricket's Environmentality Challenge for their accomplishments and commitment to protecting the natural resources in their community," said Chrisman. "With their environmental ethic, they are setting an example we can all follow."

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell praised the fifth graders' passion for environmental action. "Mr. Neubacher's students didn't stop caring about the environment at the boundary of their school," said O'Connell. "Instead, they rallied the hearts and minds of hundreds of fellow community members."

Other dignitaries present were Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture A.G. Kawamura; United States Environmental Protection Agency Regional Administrator Wayne Nastri; Manager of the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service Steve Thompson; Chairman of the Integrated Waste Management Board Rosario Marin; Senior Vice President Corporate Environmental Policy, The Walt Disney Company Kym Murphy; and, members of the California Environmental Education Interagency Network.

"I have often thought that our company should have an advisory board made up of fifth graders," said Murphy. "Their remarkable optimism and ingenuity would, and does, benefit all of us."

“With Disney’s Jiminy Cricket Environmental Challenge, children learn the importance of clean air, water and soil - all cornerstones of a healthy community,” said Nastri. “We congratulate Sonoma County’s El Verano Elementary School winners for their commitment to the environment.”

The Sonoma students were among more than 40,000 students from 1,300 classes throughout California who participated in this year’s Environmental Challenge. The class impressed judges with its environmental education project, “Dare to Care.”

As part of the project, the students developed a community involvement program to restore a local creek and monitor its ecosystem. The class also wrote letters to United States senators advocating a cease to illegal Bushmeat trade and sponsored a project to help victims of the December 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia. To further spread their message of environmental action, the class developed projects for each grade level at El Verano Elementary School and encouraged their fellow students to participate in these programs.

This is the fourth Grand Prize win for El Verano teacher David Neubacher. In 1996, 1997 and 2003, Neubacher’s class also impressed judges, winning the top prize with other notable environmental projects.

The Environmental Challenge, first launched in 1994, is a partnership between The Walt Disney Company and the California Environmental Education Interagency Network. CEEIN includes representatives from the California Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Education, the Department of Food and Agriculture, the Resources Agency, the United States Environmental Protection Agency, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Services. The Environmental Challenge encourages students to develop action projects that target real-world environmental challenges.

To date, more than 680,000 children have participated in the Challenge. Teachers interested in this program can request educational materials from CEEIN to develop environmentally related curricula using the California Content Standards.

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Jiminy Cricket’s Environmental Challenge is a result of a unique partnership between The Walt Disney Company in partnership with the State of California’s Environmental Education Interagency Network (CEEIN). For more information on the challenge, visit [www.jceckids.org](http://www.jceckids.org).